

**ULI Chicago 9th Annual Vision Awards
July 11, 2024**



Program Finalist: 75th Street Boardwalk | Greater Chatham Initiative

Team:

Developer/Owner: Greater Chatham Initiative

Architecture Firm: Krueck Sexton Partners

Program Description: During COVID-19 in 2021, GCI launched the 75th Street Boardwalk to support the survival and resilience of beloved local restaurants –

part of Greater Chatham’s long-standing food culture – on the two-block stretch known as “Restaurant Row.” Through this tactical urbanism peacekeeping project, GCI activated 395 feet of temporary outdoor spaces for dining, playing, and gathering with music, art, dance, exercise classes and other events that drew 800 new visitors and helped increase sales at many of the 30+ businesses in the surrounding area. While the boardwalk was planned as a three-month installation, its immense popularity kept it open for nearly a full 12 months when it was removed in 2022. The \$220,000 Boardwalk was created through a unique public-private partnership, in collaboration with site design group (landscape architects), Westbrook Architects, Krueck SextonPartners, City of Chicago Dept of Planning and Department of Transportation. Painted an exuberant bright green, adorned with murals, 500 linear feet of plants, tables, chairs, umbrellas, lighting, toys, games, and fire pits, it became the must-see space on the southside. Known as ‘Restaurant Row’, the corridor is lined with well-known eateries that serve as anchors for the ‘Row’, and within Greater Chatham itself. The Boardwalk specifically complemented the existing bevy of six black-and brown-owned and long-established eateries that front or were immediately adjacent to the Boardwalk: Lem’s Bar-B-Que, Original Soul Vegetarian, Brown Sugar Bakery, Frances Lounge, Mabe’s Deli, and Margarita’s Pizza. Lem’s Bar-B-Q, Original Soul Vegetarian, and Brown Sugar Bakery are famous regional destinations, attracting patrons from a 25-mile radius.

The bright green design was colorful to prevent traffic accidents but gave an outdoor living room atmosphere in the 8 room design. It became a gathering space for residents and for employees working along 75th Street as a workspace. There was also space for dogs and children to congregate, welcoming to all, as residents worked in the third space. Krueck SextonPartners worked with designers from Illinois Institute of Technology to create outdoor furniture, called The Nest, as a unique inviting focal point. This was funded thanks to Chicago Community Trust and a grant from Jewel-Osco, Bank of America, Driehaus Foundation, et al. One unique element of this project was that it was born from the civil unrest in the City of Chicago (and across the nation) at the time. Magnificent Mile businesses, such as Cartier, that had used plywood to block windows then donated that material to GCI. In repurposing the materials to create the Boardwalk, GCI helped provide residents with a safe, inviting space during a time of turmoil. The 75th Street Boardwalk was recognized for its unique addition to the community numerous times, including: 2020-2021 Merit Award for Design from the Illinois chapter of the American Society for LandscapeArchitects (ILASLA) Designation as a 2021 CityArts Project by the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs and SpecialEvents (DCASE) 2021 John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation Creative Placemaking award, as part of the Chicago Neighborhood Development Awards (CNDA) 2021 Congress for New Urbanism (CNU) CharterAward in the Block, Street and Building category.